

# Sunflower Sutra By Allen Ginsberg

I walked on the banks of the tincan banana dock and sat down under the huge shade of a Southern Pacific locomotive to look at the sunset over the box house hills and cry.

Jack Kerouac sat beside me on a busted rusty iron pole, companion, we thought the same thoughts of the soul, bleak and blue and sad-eyed, surrounded by the gnarled steel roots of trees of machinery.

The oily water on the river mirrored the red sky, sun sank on top of final Frisco peaks, no fish in that stream, no hermit in those mounts, just ourselves rheumy-eyed and hung-over like old bums on the riverbank, tired and wily.

Look at the Sunflower, he said, there was a dead gray shadow against the sky, big as a man, sitting dry on top of a pile of ancient sawdust—

—I rushed up enchanted—it was my first sunflower, memories of Blake—my visions—Harlem

and Hells of the Eastern rivers, bridges clanking Joes Greasy Sandwiches, dead baby carriages, black treadless tires forgotten and unretreaded, the poem of the riverbank, condoms & pots, steel knives, nothing stainless, only the dank muck and the razor-sharp artifacts passing into the past—

and the gray Sunflower poised against the sunset, crackly bleak and dusty with the smut and smog and smoke of olden locomotives in its eye—

corolla of bleary spikes pushed down and broken like a battered crown, seeds fallen out of its face, soon-to-be-toothless mouth of sunny air, sunrays obliterated on its hairy head like a dried wire spiderweb,

leaves stuck out like arms out of the stem, gestures from the  
sawdust root, broke pieces of plaster fallen out of the black twigs,  
a dead fly in its ear,  
Unholy battered old thing you were, my sunflower O my soul, I  
loved you then!

The grime was no man's grime but death and human  
locomotives,

all that dress of dust, that veil of darkened railroad skin, that smog  
of cheek, that eyelid of black mis'ry, that sooty hand or phallus or  
protuberance of artificial worse-than-dirt—industrial—modern—  
all that civilization spotting your crazy golden crown—  
and those blear thoughts of death and dusty loveless eyes and  
ends and withered roots below, in the home-pile of sand and  
sawdust, rubber dollar bills, skin of machinery, the guts and  
innards of the weeping coughing car, the empty lonely tincans  
with their rusty tongues alack, what more could I name, the  
smoked ashes of some cock cigar, the cunts of wheelbarrows and  
the milky breasts of cars, wornout asses out of chairs & sphincters  
of dynamos—all these  
entangled in your mummied roots—and you there standing  
before me in the sunset, all your glory in your form!

A perfect beauty of a sunflower! a perfect excellent lovely  
sunflower existence! a sweet natural eye to the new hip moon,  
woke up alive and excited grasping in the sunset shadow sunrise  
golden monthly breeze!

How many flies buzzed round you innocent of your grime, while  
you cursed the heavens of the railroad and your flower soul?  
Poor dead flower? when did you forget you were a flower? when  
did you look at your skin and decide you were an impotent dirty  
old locomotive? the ghost of a locomotive? the specter and  
shade of a once powerful mad American locomotive?

You were never no locomotive, Sunflower, you were a sunflower!  
And you Locomotive, you are a locomotive, forget me not!  
So I grabbed up the skeleton thick sunflower and stuck it at my  
side like a scepter,  
and deliver my sermon to my soul, and Jack's soul too, and  
anyone who'll listen,  
—We're not our skin of grime, we're not dread bleak dusty  
imageless locomotives, we're golden sunflowers inside, blessed  
by our own seed & hairy naked accomplishment-bodies growing  
into mad black formal sunflowers in the sunset, spied on by our  
own eyes under the shadow of the mad locomotive riverbank  
sunset Frisco hilly tincan evening sitdown vision.